




# Women Who Perpetrate Violence

<http://cjinvolvedwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Working-With-Women-Who-Perpetrate-Violence-A-Practice-Guide6-23.pdf>



# Women who Perpetrate Violence

- Limited research, knowledge and understanding of this group of women
  - They are not a homogenous group
  - May be some differences in context and expression of violence (when compared to men)
  - Overall, women comprise 5% of all state prisoners having committed a violent offense (Kubiak, Kim, Fedock, & Bybee, 2012)
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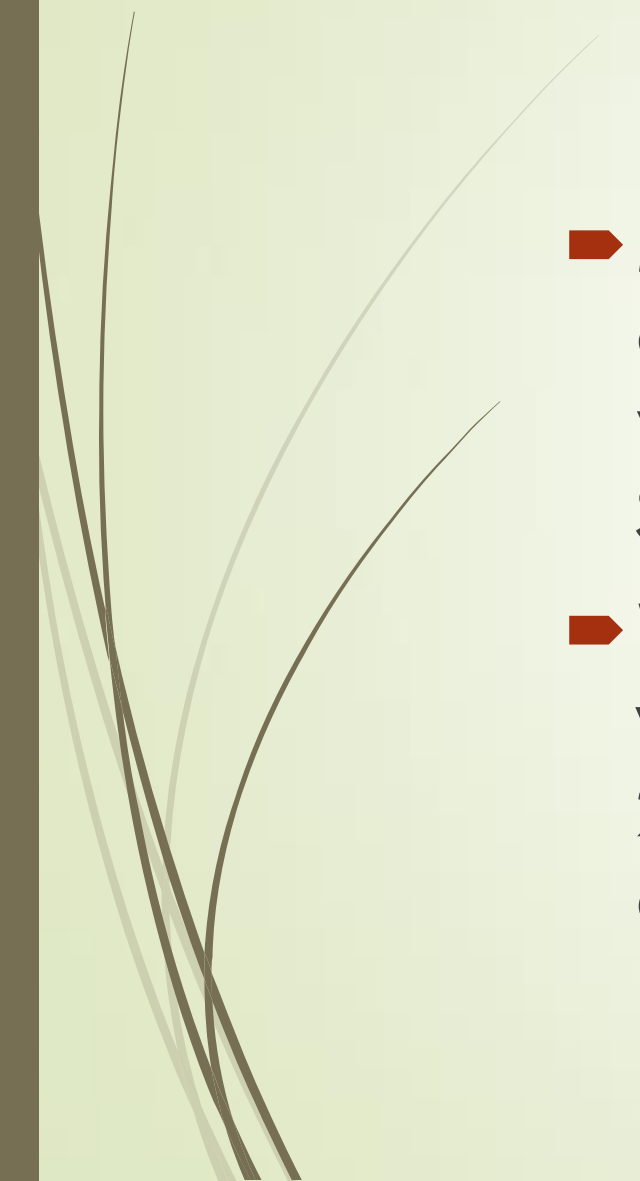


# Current State of Knowledge/Research

1. There are a number of women who engage in violence primarily within their intimate relationships (IPV)
2. There is also a group of women who engage in generalized violence and rely on aggression in other contexts.
  - Women who fall into this group are more likely to have a history of justice involvement, report experiences of childhood and current abuse, present with mental health issues, and report other factors that can impact risk for future criminal behavior. (Van Dieten, 2014, page 12.)

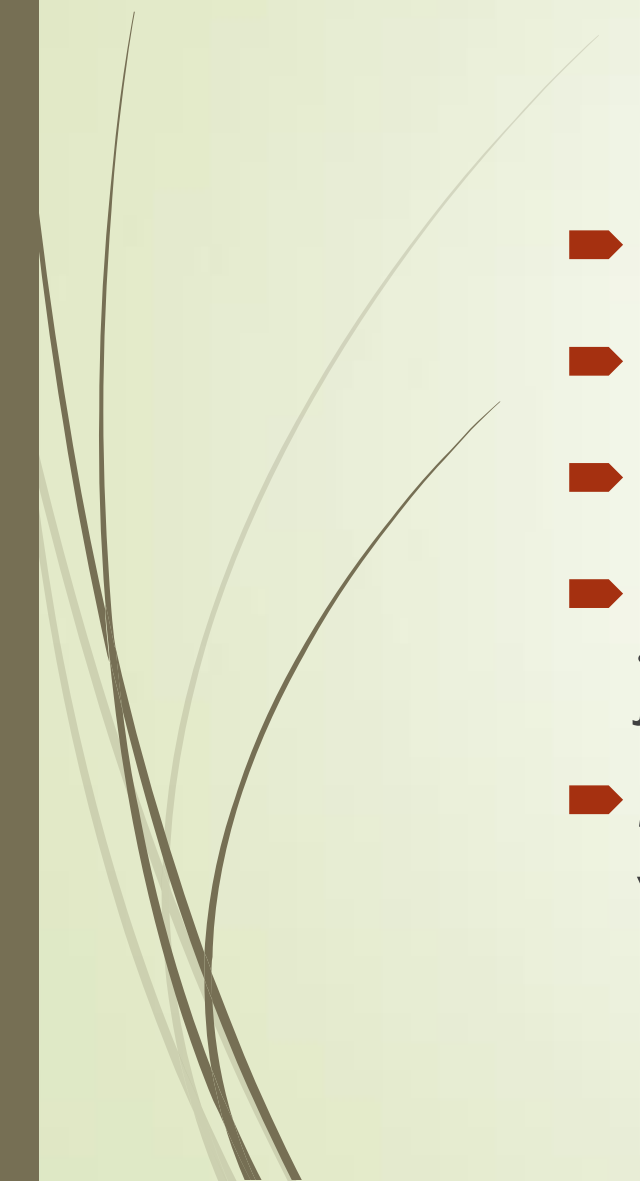


# Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

- Most frequently reported convictions of violent crime for women are linked to domestic violence (Henning, Martinsson, & Holdford, 2009; Swan & Snow, 2002).
  - Women are more likely to have a relationship with the target of their violence (Rosseger et al., 2009) – may also commit violent acts because of or in concert with relationship – than men
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# Women who are involved in IPV

- Engage in IPV for different reasons than men
  - High levels of victimization
  - Largely self defense
  - However, there may be other motives, such as jealousy, frustration, anger, etc.
  - Most do not engage in IPV again, but may be victimized again
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# Studies have identified factors linked to Women's Violence

- **Demographic/environmental factors:**


- Age, low income/poverty, unemployment, race/ethnicity
- Lack of opportunity (vocational)

- **Family factors:**

- Witness to violence in home
- Exposed to parental substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration
- Low relationship satisfaction, mutual violence

- **Personal factors:**

- History of sexual abuse and trauma
- Substance use
- Mental health
- Difficulties with self-regulation and emotional control, poor interpersonal skills, impulsive
- High levels of anger expressed as aggression or through self-harm behaviors, suicidal ideation, or previous suicide attempts



# In samples of studies, some general observations about women who perpetrate violence

- Women who commit violent crimes have a higher degree of need overall.
  - History of substance abuse
  - History of family conflict
  - Difficulties in securing employment and stable housing
  - More likely to have mental health diagnoses
  - More likely to demonstrate difficulties with low frustration tolerance, interpersonal problem-solving, and empathy
  - Conduct disorders and psychopathy, antisocial personalities – needs further study



# Implications for Assessment

- Little agreement on what tools and measures to use
- Few studies have demonstrated the clinical relevance and utility of tools for assessing women's risk of violence
- Most tools developed and validated on samples of men
- Some studies show that gender neutral tools overclassify women
- Specialized tools (DVSI, SARA, PCL-R, HCR-20) do not predict well for women, although at least one study showed that the HAR-20 did predict better for women
- **Do conduct a thorough clinical interview**



# Implications for Treatment

## ➤ Intimate Partner Violence

- Context and circumstances
- Healthy relationships
- Adaptive skill building and strengths
- Build social supports
- Safety planning

## ➤ Trauma Informed

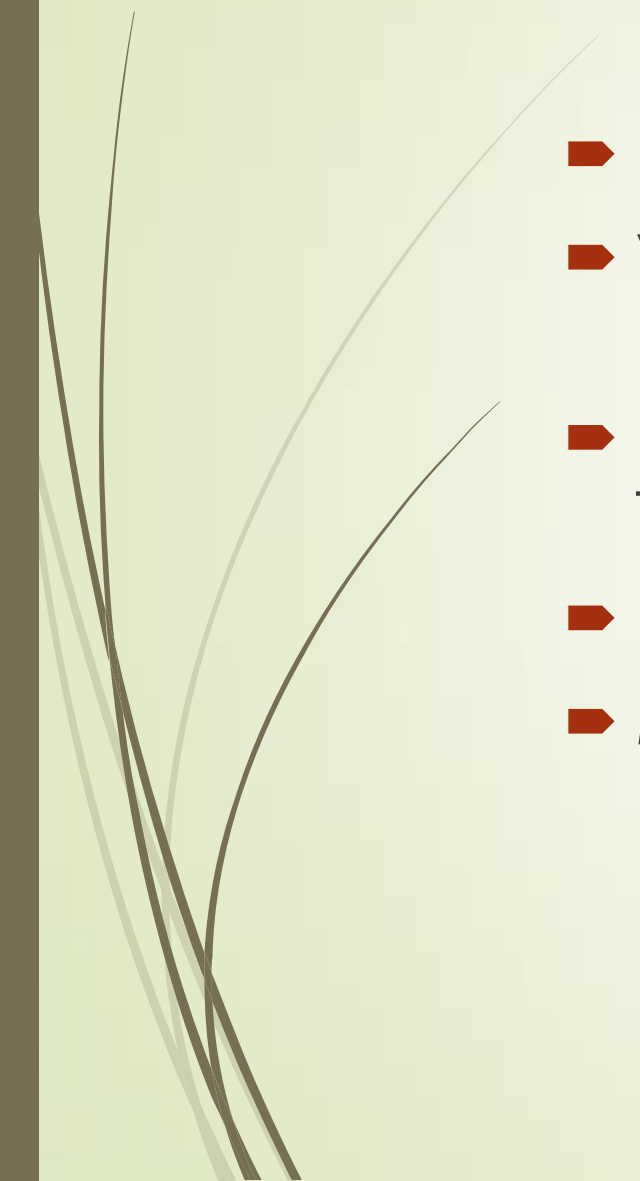
- Emotional regulation
- Social-cognitive processing skills
- Coping skills
- Mindfulness
- Social skills to build health relationships


## ➤ Trauma Treatment

- Substance abuse
- Parenting
- Mental health
- Educational/vocational
- Employment
- Housing
- Financial



# Evidence-based Treatment Programs

- Beyond Violence (Covington, 2013)
  - Vista: A program for women who use force (Larance, HoffmanRuzicka, & Shivas, 2009)
  - Domestic Violence Treatment for Abusive Women: A Treatment Manual (Bowen, 2009)
  - Beyond Anger and Violence (Covington, 2014)
  - Moving On: Living Safely and Without Violence (Orbis Partners, 2012)
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“...Perhaps the most striking gender difference, is the fact that women perpetrators are likely to suffer more severe physical and psychological injuries than male perpetrators (BairMerritt et al., 2010; Banwell, 2010; Dutton et al., 2005; Straus, 2009)....

...Thus, regardless of motive and intent, a woman's use of violence places her at risk for continued victimization.”

(Van Dieten, 2014, page 25)